

AT THE 28TH CONGRESS OF THE CPSU

Gorbachev sums up political debate

Soviet Communist Party leader Mikhail Gorbachev delivered the following remarks as he summed up the political debate at the 28th Party Congress in the Kremlin on July 10:

THE discussion is only getting under way, and much is still ahead. It took place also here – both in this hall and in the working groups and commissions, in which Congress delegates are closely involved.

With the debates at our meetings with delegates – workers, farmers, secretaries of Party organisations and Party committees at district and city levels, and agrarian specialists – thrown in, we can say that the Congress raised a lot of issues.

On the one hand, it confirmed what we already knew about processes developing in the country. On the other, it added much to our knowledge, especially concerning the possible consequence of various trends gaining ground in our society.

It is not my aim now to sum up the results fully. This will have to be done probably after the Congress by a newly-elected Party Central Committee and its agencies, and by Party committees at every level.

It is not easy to sum it all up at once. But I shall say what I feel, think and see at this moment.

The discussion as a whole reflected the state of minds, the situation in the economy, the social sphere and political life, and the strains of perestroika.

There was a great deal of superficial, incidental and overly emotional things said during the debate – either out of excessive concern, in anger or due to an inability to argue. Never mind, we shall all have to learn. Such is our reality.

I would single out the most important issues in the focus of the debate, prompting the most heated arguments and most questions.

I think it is correct to pose the question in this way: what lessons can be drawn even today from the discussion and from what is happening at our Congress?

The first thing that should be stressed is that with a few exceptions, the political course of perestroika, the course of updating our entire society in the context of socialist choice, is not doubted and is supported by the Congress.

Most delegates realise that this course has been dictated by life itself and that, materialising in policies in every area – from the economy to culture – it has led to sweeping changes in society and continues to influence our development greatly.

My position – and it should be completely clear to you – is as follows. Despite the mistakes, miscalculations and foot-dragging, which delegates here were right to point out and sharply criticise because this costs a great deal to society and the Party, and despite the dramatic situation in the country, I consider the overall results of the changes to be substantial and positive.

Opinions clashed at the Congress about the achievements of perestroika. Some people attempted to weigh it on scales, using the four rules of arithmetic. This is not a serious approach, comrades. Such a phenomenon as perestroika should be judged by new criteria, historical criteria.

Those who really understand that perestroika is essential and that it is a revolution rather than a face-lifting, realise that we still have a great deal to overcome.

While accepting criticism, however stinging, in relation to the initiators of perestroika and being aware of critical attitudes to the Central

Committee's progress report, I do not renounce anything in it because it is thoroughly well-considered and balanced.

The principal positive result is that society won freedom, which unfettered popular energies, offered scope for ideas previously gripped in the vice of dogmas and old formulas, gave vent to concern about the future of the nation and the future of socialism, and made it possible to involve millions of people in politics and launch vital change.

Without freedom, this Congress would not have been held, or it would not have been held in the atmosphere we have here now.

Much of what accumulated in the stifling and repressive atmosphere of Stalinism and stagnation, and is now surfacing, is far from pleasant and constructive. But this has to be tolerated. This is what a revolution is all about. Its primary function is always to give people freedom. And perestroika with its democratisation and glasnost has already fulfilled its primary task.

Society needs spiritual revival as much as air. It takes place right before our eyes. With all the twists to this process, it has already exerted a huge impact. Society has changed. All of us have changed.

It is entirely another matter that neither the Party nor the country as a whole, neither the old nor the newly formed organisations and movements, neither of us, comrades, have yet learnt how to use the attained freedom. Therefore the priority task is to learn how to do this sooner and better.

We have made considerable progress in the political reform. We have created new structures of power from the top to the bottom on the basis of the democratic expression of the people's will.

They continue to be perfected, but we have already started to act, giving real substance to our democracy, the notion of a law-governed state.

It has been said more than once that there are many shortcomings in the work of these new structures, that experience is lacking, that procedures and mechanisms are not yet operating smoothly and that political culture, competence and specific knowledge are lacking at times.

The shaping of the personnel of elected councils has not yet been completed. Nevertheless, the new councils got down to business, people's deputies assumed a more responsible attitude and are striving to tackle specific problems and needs of the people as soon as possible.

Real Soviet power is being restored, and this is a gratifying factor, one of the most important achievements of perestroika, in which communists, Party organisations have been and are participating.

Still there is a certain distance, I would say, coolness between elected councils and the Party. And here communists should be more attentive. They should first of all consider how they should act. They should consider if this alienation is not linked with the fact that we still cannot abandon the former methods of dealing with local councils, methods inherited from the command-administrative system. New government bodies, in turn, react painfully to such methods.

I said in the report and would like to repeat again that the consolidation of legality, putting things in order and shaping a mechanism by means of which the decrees and resolutions will be implemented are now linked directly with an early achievement of full power by councils at every level.

It is a sacred duty of the Party, of Party organisations and committees, of communists and working in councils and production collectives to assist this.

But at the same time, I would urge council deputies to act constructively, within the framework of the Constitution and law. I address them first of all as President.

Frankly speaking, some deputies have begun to assume a confrontational stand, and this can bear nothing good.

It is bad if communists fail to understand what renewed councils mean now, and that they themselves should contribute to normalising the situation in the interests of the people.

It is also bad if councils fail to see the need to interact with Party organisations.

As regards another lesson learnt from the debate, I go along with the appraisals made by those delegates who, supporting perestroika, made many critical remarks that this line has not always been pursued consistently.

Many important decisions and laws which should have directed social processes and prevented the emergence of negative phenomena have not been fulfilled. All this should be considered and conclusions should be drawn.

When trying to react promptly to the requirements of life, to work out urgently needed laws and decisions, we gave little attention to their fulfilment. A real mechanism for this has not been created.

Hence it became apparent that there was a need for presidential power, there was a need to proceed faster with political reform, to create new councils, as without them all these laws were not working.

The centre is responsible for this to a considerable degree. But I also want to mention the responsibility of comrades working in republics and provinces. There is no need for us to shift the blame to the provinces, nor for them to the centre. There is a need to co-operate, to pool efforts, not to look for scape goats.

Many things can perhaps be explained by the fact that comrades in the republics and in provinces, and, there is no denying, also in the centre, became confused, even shocked.

And then there was a relapse to the old ailment – lack of initiative, of independent approaches, inability to act unconventionally in conditions of democracy, in unusual circumstances.

And I would like to say why. All the difficulties that perestroika encounters, and the fact that new bodies have difficulty starting up and gaining momentum should not be explained only by the resistance of those who refuse to accept perestroika.

There is no denying that such people exist, and I spoke of them in the report, at meetings with workers, with secretaries of Party organisations. But many people are yet to grasp the present situation.

And now we speak about a crisis in the Party, and it is rooted precisely in the inability, and in a number of cases in the unwillingness, to understand that we live and work in a new society of which unprecedented politisation is characteristic, in a society with broad and practically unlimited glasnost, unprecedented through the entire history of freedom.

Meanwhile, many Party organisations and communists continue to use habitual methods, inherited from the past.

And if any of the delegates, and going by the speeches there are some such delegates among us, came to the Congress hoping to take the Party back to the old conditions of commands and orders, I must say that they are deeply mistaken. We should devote every hour to advancing perestroika and adjusting our work to new conditions.

The Party will be the vanguard of society and will be able to act successfully only if it wholly realises its new role and completes within a brief period of time its reforms on the roads of democracy, and more promptly learns to work with the masses in a new way.

It is necessary to overcome the alienation from the people inherited from the previous times. This is to be achieved first of all by renewal of the activity of primary Party organisations, renewal of cadres and enhancing their prestige.

I am deeply upset by the misunderstanding that emerged here. We shall fail to advance unless we are able to consolidate the Party's positions, to offer an effective policy to society and thus impart fresh dynamism to perestroika, unless we realise that everything that took place in the past is now dated and unacceptable.

From the atmosphere of the Congress, from many speeches and the manner of debating employed by some delegates, I sensed that far from everyone has understood that the Party is living and working in a different society, that a renewed Party with a different style of activity is needed.

We are not changing our line or our choice and are committed to socialist values. But, believe me, the Party's success depends on whether it realises that this is already a different society. Otherwise it will be marginalised by other forces and we shall lose ground.

We now have immense possibilities and the main thing is to realise that we shall not achieve much without renewal, democratisation, without strengthening the living bond with the people or without active work among the masses.

I had a lot of personal conversations with comrades during the Congress and I must say that I came to feel more understanding of the unconventional and novelty of the situation in which the Party has found itself, from, so to speak, rank-and-file comrades – workers, farmers, intellectuals, and secretaries of primary Party organisations. Generally speaking, though, this is an expression from the lexicon of the past, and, maybe, I should not have used it.

Comrade Gaivoronsky from Donetsk spoke here. He correctly recalled that the most important thing is for the Party to increase broad and deep contacts with the working class. This was also illustrated by a meeting with worker delegates and with those invited to the Congress.

Party committees, including the Central Committee, are to blame for the fact that during major political campaigns they were unable to uphold the interests of the working class. They pondered for too long over their attitude towards emerging new forms in the working class movement. We have lost a good deal because of that. The working class puts this question squarely before us.

Another lesson from the discussion is that we must continue to act in the main directions of perestroika. The Party and state leadership were scathingly criticised for the economic situation, the state of affairs on the market and the provision of goods.

To solve the food problem is the key task in this respect and I put it to the fore. Once we remove its acuteness, 70-80 per cent of the acuteness of the situation in the social sphere – the transition to a regulated market and the housing shortage – will be eased as well.

In this connection, and I will not conceal it, I was worried when three quarters of the Congress decided to change the name of the commission for economic reform, excluding the word

“market”. This means that there is a persisting lack of understanding of the need for an abrupt turn in order to radically change the economic situation.

Has our entire history not shown, comrades, the futility of attempts to get out of the plight, in which both the state and citizens found themselves, by patching up the command-and-administrative system?

We have already incurred tremendous losses by stubbornly clinging to it for decades and continuing to cling even now, thereby applying brakes on renewal and the transition to new forms of economic life in the country.

If we continue to act in this way, then, I shall be frank, we will bankrupt the country. I am expressing my viewpoint explicitly.

The advantages of the market economy have been proven on a world scale and the question now is only whether high social protection – which is characteristic of our socialist system, the system for the working people – can be ensured under market conditions.

The answer is this: it is not only possible but it is precisely a regulated market economy that will make it possible to augment social wealth and raise the living standards of everyone.

We hold state power and therefore can make laws and take decisions to shape the transition to market relations.

Of course, there must be a period during which the market is formed before the advantages of the market will manifest themselves in full. The most complex task during this period is to work out and take a series of special measures for social protection, particularly of low-income citizens.

The report mentioned that people were frightened by the way in which the intention to move to a market economy was announced. They visualise a market in terms of high prices, and not shop shelves with a plentiful supply of goods.

From the beginning I said that raising prices was not the way to proceed. But when launching the reform one should bear in mind that there can be no transition to a market without a pricing reform.

In general, we should rectify this impression and, most importantly, submit well-thought-out proposals to both the Supreme Soviet and society by September, so that they can determine their attitude and make the choice.

I already had an opportunity to answer, in an expanded form, questions concerning the agrarian policy. These issues were acutely raised here but, I feel, were supported by the entire Congress.

On the whole we made much headway during our meeting with agrarians, shaping an understanding of necessary actions in the agrarian sphere. We have already begun to take specific measures. On Monday Nikolai Ryzhkov signed a decision to write off the debts of the countryside.

I have expressed my attitude: here at this Congress we must take up a political position with regard to farmers, the countryside, and not simply with regard to the food issue, which constitutes only part of the problem.

Once the countryside stands solidly on its feet, our farmers will become confident, begin to live well and get an opportunity to work with initiative – this means that the food issue will be resolved more quickly.

As far as the agrarian question is concerned, I still felt that there was no full understanding of the issue. Two main approaches to the advance of the countryside have manifested themselves.

I mean, on the one hand, the reorganisation of production relations on the strength of the laws on ownership, land and lease arrangements, and, on the other hand, assistance to the countryside in the provision of social amenities and facilities, the construction of roads, the production of farm machinery and so on.

There are people who, it seems, are out to deliberately provoke a negative attitude to Party

policy worked out at the March plenary session and who try, by hook or by crook, to create the impression that the leadership does not want to help the countryside.

Moreover, I heard this remark from the audience: “Gorbachev should be placed at the head of the agrarian commission because he does not like agriculture.” That was quite a suggestion, indeed. Just imagine me as a person who does not like agriculture.

You know that I am no proponent of strong language, but in this case I have to say that such things are the outcome of either lack of understanding or are prompted by unseemly calculations.

I repeat from this rostrum for the Congress, the Party and the entire country to hear: our position is, first, that it is essential to give full freedom to all types of management in the countryside on the basis of a completely free choice.

Second, it is necessary to establish reasonable exchanges between town and countryside, industry and agriculture, exchanges which would promote the advance of the countryside within the shortest period of time.

Third, the state should promote as fully as it can a solution of the urgent problems of the countryside, primarily the creation of living conditions worthy of our farmers. These are the three major strategies, on the strength of which it is possible to revive the countryside and provide the country with food. None of these principles can be removed from this triad, for the entire system would collapse.

We should make major decisions on matters concerning the agrarian sector, the countryside as a whole, and the position of farmers. This is, so to speak, my summary of the discussion which has been held here.

Yet another two subjects were raised here acutely and it was not easy to listen to all this because they concerned people's life and have already had damaging consequences. These are, to begin with, the ecological problem, one of the acutest issues. We should not put its solution off. We came to realise the acuteness of the problem too late. But much, comrades, can still be rectified. This is illustrated by foreign experience.

Approximately three decades ago, dozens of towns in the United States were within an ecological disaster zone, rivers were literally dead and the great lakes were on the verge of ruin. But large inputs and the implementation of special programmes made it possible to drastically improve the situation. The same is being done in Europe, which is saturated with industry and chemical businesses.

Therefore, however hard is the situation we now find ourselves in, it is necessary to make large inputs of funds in the nature conservation sphere, regarding it absolutely on a par with such vital tasks as the provision of people with food and housing.

Clean air and water are essential for people in a no lesser degree than bread, comrades. I think state programmes will be needed, of course, to tackle the sphere of ecology as a whole and major ecological problems.

The aftermath of the Chernobyl accident causes anguish in all of us. Comrades from Byelorussia, the Ukraine and Bryansk region must come to realise that we partake of their misfortune.

We face a situation that confronts us with more and more problems, and this is a cause for deep reflection. Just one reactor, and what consequences imagine what would happen if a nuclear war breaks out. Nuclear reactors will be destroyed even in a conventional war, and the consequences will be similar to those at Chernobyl. Our country is unable to cope with these consequences. Billions of roubles have been spent and will be spent, while new needs are emerging.

I want people in Byelorussia, the Ukraine, Bryansk region to hear my words, I want them

to know that the entire country is at their side, is aware of their tragedy and will continue to help. Similarly, we have mentioned the problem of the Aral Sea here and the people there should feel that we will come their aid as well.

The delegates have well-founded concern for what is going on in the spiritual sphere, in culture, science and education. I have received dozens of collective letters from intellectuals. The reasons are not in the material base, which is lagging behind, although this should also be borne in mind. The Congress, I hope, will state firmly that we should support the development and promotion of our culture, science, education, art and literature.

I fully share the concern of teachers who spoke at the Congress, that the genuine revival of our schools is crucial for the country's future. There is a direct dependence – we will never be able to create a prosperous economy, raise our science and technology to the world level, succeed in battling alcoholism, drug abuse and moral decline, unless we attach proper prominence to education and enhance the role of the teacher.

It is clear that all problems of Party life and work in new conditions in one way or another boil down to ideology. This area of Party work has been subject, perhaps, to the most fierce criticism.

Bluntly speaking, we have had our share of rudeness too. All of us still lack arguments and constructive proposals. We have made little progress here.

I do not doubt the gravity of the situation in some spheres of intellectual development. And I share the alarm over morals which have become widespread and which are incompatible with the ideals of humane socialism. This is not only a legacy of the past but also the result. I repeat, of the explosion of freedom, which society experienced all of a sudden, after being confined for a long time in a room with stale air. We were simply unaware of many things. All this demands great attention of the Party, intellectuals, the school, the entire system of our cultural and educational establishments. This is so.

But I also felt in the criticism of the ideological situation the strong breath of old attitudes. In the report I tried to approach the problem of ideology in its new form. The problem is what we understand by socialism. Some comrades believe that if we write down now in the policy statement and other documents that we remain loyal to old attitudes, everything will click into place. What place? Won't we find ourselves where we have been for more than 60 years, with the known consequences?

The ideology of socialism is not a text-book where everything is compartmentalised by chapters, paragraphs, rules and principles. It will take shape together with socialism itself, as we will facilitate the development of a well-fed, civilised, spiritually rich, free, and happy country, as we come to embrace universal human values again not as something alien from the class point of view, but as normal for man. These values have been worked out throughout centuries and millenia. What their neglect has brought us is well known.

The ideology of socialism will shape up as the country gets integrated into the general progress of civilisation. It is for this reason that new thinking, which is being accepted in the world as our new internationalism, bringing together rather than splitting the world into confronting camps, underlies the widest possible framework for shaping it.

We inherit from Marx, Engels, and Lenin the top methodology, the dialectical way of thinking, on which we will draw in theory and practice. But we will not allow everything created by the classics to be reduced into just another short course, which some people seem to regret judging by some speeches. This will not come to pass. It will kill perestroika and society.

It struck me that no sooner had a speaker mounted this rostrum, trying to set the problems of our day in a philosophical way and look at our

work in this context, as apathy could be felt in the hall and the clamp-down started.

But how have we grown accustomed to simple and clear formulae: "To be – or not to be", "down with – not down with". Let us think. We are after all a Party which lays claim to be the vanguard of society. Given the current level of intellectual work, the sluggishness and our attitude to intellectual work, we will never become the vanguard force and lose even what we have today.

And another lesson from the debates. Delegates have brought to the 28th Congress their concern over instability in society. At the meeting with workers one worker said bluntly: "Mikhail Sergeevich, Nikolai Ivanovich, answer two questions – when will there be order in the country and no profiteers?"

Seemingly simple questions which need simple answers, but they simply do not exist. I would say that the sooner we saturate the market, the sooner and more effectively the economy will work, the sooner we will defeat profiteers and the shadow economy.

A regional Party secretary said: "Can you do what Andropov did?" I replied to this question and can repeat here at the Congress:

Fighting profiteering is an 80 per cent economic issue. Where there is no advanced economy, the swindler flourishes. Black market dealers and corrupt elements feed on shortages.

But does this mean that we should sit with our arms folded until we tackle these issues? Certainly not. You rightly demand that we tighten order. I want to demand of you that the entire system of soviets, that we formed for the whole year while the profiteer and criminal were active, be set in motion. Now that the system is formed, let's join our efforts and take a swipe at them. Stabilisation in society will now be linked exactly with this, with the work of government, economic and Party bodies.

We have overlooked a good deal in inter-ethnic relations, lost time, and when we noticed this, were late to act. This is a lesson for all of us. I will not excuse myself. I do not want to make excuses. You cannot undo the past, although there were a great many meetings of the Politburo, meetings with Party chiefs and in commissions, and many trips. But evidently, all this was not enough.

The all-important thing is that we failed to see the danger in time. All of us, let's honestly admit, thought that everything was all right here, everything was solved, and basically raised toasts for people's friendship. This was our work in the sphere of nationality policy.

Suddenly, we became aware of the problem. But we did not react at once. Neither did we make a correct assessment at once. A platform, on which we relied to conduct our work, appeared only later. We should act now without losing time. We have political assessments, the Party's platform. Many decisions were adopted by the Supreme Soviet. Lastly, the Federation Council has begun work and the elaboration of a new union treaty is under way.

I propose to issue, on behalf of the communists represented at the Congress, a call to all people of the country: let's stop, let's stop tempting fate. Let's get down to injecting new vitality to our union on the basis of documents and approaches that are already clear to all of us. I think everybody will hear us and respond to this call, but this presupposes our active work.

Both at the Congress of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and at this Congress, especially in commissions, we heard once again sharp criticism and direct objections to our new foreign policy. Certainly, we will take into account competent judgments on specific issues. But I dismiss attempts to question our policy as totally unacceptable and prompted by someone's selfish interests.

Our new foreign policy offered affected the economy, the Army, and defence. We are moving towards reforms in all these areas, including a state programme for servicemen's social pro-

tection. We should accomplish this so that the Army feels the people's concern.

Help needs to be given to our collectives in the defence industry, where the best personnel and teams of scientists are grouped and where there are good capacities to restructure production within the shortest possible time and get down to producing top-class output badly needed by the country. The entire country stands to benefit from this, especially concerning the retooling of industries turning out consumer goods.

Certainly, there are difficulties. But they are of a temporary nature. Problems here should be tackled as soon as possible. But is this a pretext for turning a blind eye to everything that our foreign policy gave to the country and the whole world? I reject attempts to question this. One of the Party chiefs even advised me not to go abroad. Why do we go there? We go there in order to avoid war, to conduct perestroika in normal conditions, and lastly, to free resources and convert them to the needs of the country.

One cannot find oneself to be under the thumb of people who are not competent in politics. There would be trouble. The Party that claims to be a vanguard should be a guiding force rather than adapt itself to various sentiments.

Just look what questions were raised: did we act wisely in embarking on the path of disarmament and cuts in military spending, exorbitant and unnecessary for ensuring security? The reply follows directly from the question. Did we act wisely in deciding against intervention in developments under way in Eastern Europe? Well, do you want tanks again? Shall we teach them again how to live?

I am certain the whole world is paying heed to us when we pursue the course of perestroika and seek to show the world that our society is capable of being progressive and disposed in a friendly way to all peoples, capable of offering co-operation. This is the way to influence the world.

It takes some thinking to ask this question: did we act wisely in withdrawing from Afghanistan? Well, I simply do not know who we are dealing with.

And more. Did we act wisely in adjusting and developing good relations with tens of countries on all continents? I am sure we did, and they responded in kind. Not only rulers, but peoples. One must be blind to overlook it.

Good sense, if it is not overshadowed by selfish or parochial interests, tells us that we were right in doing this, that this meets the crucial interests of our people and the norms of morality, to say nothing about the impossibility of transforming our own country without a fresh foreign policy.

In think that explanations made at the Congress and before the Congress by my colleagues and a number of other speakers were convincing enough, so I just added emotions to finalise the matters.

He who wants to hear and has ears, will hear. He who does not – leave it up to him. But we shall have our own opinion on this score.

But there is one fine point. Those who choose not to hear are not taking just a personal decision. Those who fill important posts in the state and are directly related to our international activity, even if they disagree with the policy pursued by the country's leadership, are obliged – contrary to their own opinion, to pursue state policy. The President and the government cannot have one policy and someone else has another and he will pursue that other policy. This does not exist in any state. All officials must be loyal to the government.

And if they are decent people and they disagree with government policy, they must resign.

Now about the Party and its fate – the issue which has brought us here. It is for me the issue of all my life and outlook.

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GORBACHEV SUMS UP

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What is the lesson the Congress teaches us on this score? Comrades have voiced great anxiety that the Party is losing authority, its position is becoming weaker. It is being crowded out by other political forces, and in some places communists have been forced into opposition. They blame the CPSU leadership and especially some of its members.

I will say this straight away. Comrades, in its essence this criticism is largely justified. I am only against the form. Two extremes are impermissible at this Congress – cooing with respect to anyone at all on the one hand, and boorishness on the other. This is all, as for the rest we must speak directly.

I am drawing a conclusion from this that impulses going out from the Central Committee along all these directions were insufficient. At the same time, a share of the blame belongs to Party committees of all levels.

The time, comrades, has gone for ever when a kind of mandate could be received from the Central Committee for managing a district, a city, a region or a republic, followed by sitting quietly in the place until one's last hour, irrespective of how well you conduct your affairs and what people think about you. This is the way it was here, at the top, the way it was at republican and all other levels. We have to admit that. But that time is over and done with, never to return. I am convinced of this. There are no ways to bring back the past, and no dictatorship – if this crazy idea is still being entertained by some – will solve anything.

We are on the right road. We must follow the way firmly and determinedly, getting rid of our weaknesses. This is the prime task, and we must work out a strategy and tactics which will ensure its accomplishment. There is no one to replace the Party in this. It can cope with this itself.

What should be done now for the authority of the Party to grow, for our influence to be as we wish it to be? The main thing is to have in all posts people who think in a modern way, politically vigorous and truly committed to perestroika, democracy, glasnost, but are actually unable and unwilling to work in a new way, but only seek to dominate.

I fully agree with the delegates to the Congress, workers who spoke at the Congress in favour of promoting to the leading posts advanced, literate workers, enthusiasts of perestroika. What people perestroika has discovered even at the meeting, where those were present who represented the working class at the Congress as delegates or invited guests, it was clear that they were people capable of thinking things out, analysing them politically. They were not vociferous, like some who strive to speak "the direct language of the workers" only to declare that they "have come directly from there."

It is, of course, not without importance that someone is from there – from the shopfloor and the like, from any place where our might is being forged, where the foundation is being laid on which we all stand.

Well, we are debating here, voting, arguing, forming a system, but what does the country rest upon? Workers, peasants and the intelligentsia who pull the economy forward.

Further. It is necessary to discard ossified ideological clichés from which some are taking guidance not only in debates but also in practical matters. As before, cases still occur frequently when priority is given not to the demands of life and results of work but to whether one's behaviour is consistent with stale dogma.

Adherence to dogma is a special hinderance to the development of new forms of economic management and people's initiative. If we act like this, we shall surely discredit socialism choice, the people will turn away from us.

And more. The Party will be unable to restructure unless we all realise that an end has

come to the CPSU monopoly on power and management. Even if we manage to win a majority at an election – an we can and must act so as to win a majority and retain the position of a ruling party – even in this case, it is advisable to co-operate with non-party deputies, representatives of other legally recognised political trends if they are sincerely concerned for the fate of the country. We must put an end to sectarian moods, put an end to this monopoly for ever, to erase its vestiges from the minds of Party workers and all communists.

Co-operation is a must. I share the view on this score voiced here by comrade Luchinsky. In the Central Committee report the question was raised about the desirability under present conditions of teaming with all democratic and socialist forces. Only by shoving aside party, political and national differences, shall we be able to pool all efforts in order to take the country out of the present critical situation and implement far-reaching reforms.

I am convinced that millions of communists and the overwhelming majority of Soviet people are looking to us for this – the consolidation of the Party itself and of all sound forces truly caring for the welfare of the people.

I say this with confidence, because this call has been repeatedly made in many letters and telegrams sent to me and addressed to the Congress.

Let us, comrades, heed this call of the people, the call of the times.

Gorbachev reports on draft rules

WILL the changes recorded in the draft new rules of the Soviet Communist Party have the necessary dimension to ensure a decisive renewal of the Party, establishing the authority of Party masses in it and preserving its unity and partisan spirit? These questions were discussed by the commission to formulate the new fundamental law of the Party life.

Presenting the draft Party rules to delegates to the 28th Party Congress on July 12, the commission's chairman, Communist Party chief Mikhail Gorbachev, summed up their fundamental provisions.

The Soviet Communist Party is described in the draft rules as a political organisation which, basing itself on common human values and communist ideals, sets itself the goal of creating humane, democratic socialism in the country.

The working class, peasantry, intelligentsia, and other social strata adhering to the socialist choice form the social basis of the Soviet Communist Party.

The provision about democratic centralism caused impassioned debates both before and during the Congress. Gorbachev said it had been decided not to discard this term just because it had been used as a cover for the sway of bureaucracy and excessive organisation in Party life. He said that broad democracy should be combined with centralism and discipline so that the Party would not turn into a discussion club, should not lose its ability for vigorous political action.

At the same time, lower-ranking bodies have been given broader rights in discussion and decision-making. Another important innovation is the right of the minority to assert their views in the Party press. The holding of Party referendums is also envisaged, Gorbachev said.

The Party chief said that members of the Party are given the right to unite according to platforms that do not contradict Party rules. At the same time, factions with inner discipline are not permitted.

The draft rules give wider powers to communist parties of union republics, while rejecting

In many speeches, there was an implication: perestroika is to blame for all our troubles. In some speeches one could even discern nostalgia for old times, old methods of work. I felt it in the speeches made during the meeting with the secretaries of district and city Party committees. It was a good, fruitful gathering, I will even say that a most meaningful conversation took place.

Some issues were raised very sharply, issues crucial for the life of the Party and society. But here were comrades who charged the General Secretary with leading the Party the wrong way. They said they did not need the foreign policy we have. I completely dismissed these charges. I will say this: if perestroika is to blame for anything at all, then it is only for being implemented not resolutely and consistently enough.

And this, incidentally, stems from the position of the personnel in the centre and the localities. So let us change it, let us move perestroika ahead.

Then changes will be more rapid, we shall sooner obtain the results the entire nation will feel. I see no other way apart from continuing perestroika – resolutely and consistently – including everything we are doing to transform the economy, the social sphere and the political system of our multinational state.

So let us work, comrades. We have entered the most responsible phase of perestroika. The time has come for the most crucial reforms. □

the principle of federalism in the Soviet Communist Party. "We are firmly for a united Soviet Communist Party, with a common programme and rules. We are for independence and equality of communist parties of all Soviet republics, for their vigorous participation in resolving the tasks common to the entire party," the Party leader said.

Gorbachev said he does not go along with calls for the removal of Party organisations from the country's armed forces. Meanwhile, there is a need for restructuring there. From now on, the rules envisage that Party work in the armed forces will be conducted only by primary Party organisations and elective Party bodies.

Military-political organs that have so far been guiding Party work in the Army will be included in state, not Party, structures. Their purpose will be to conduct educational and cultural work in the armed forces.

The delegates then began to discuss the draft rules paragraph by paragraph. □

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